DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 339 179 EC 300 789

TITLE	Gifted Child Development and Guidance Study.
INSTITUTION	Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Va.
SPONS AGENCY	Virginia State Dept. of Education, Richmond.
PUB DATE	Jun 90
NOTE	19p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Career Education; Career Exploration; *Child Development; *College Bound Students; Curriculum Development; *Gifted; Guidance; High Schools; Preschool Education; Program Development; Program Effectiveness; Program Implementation; Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS	Virginia (Virginia Beach)

ABSTRACT

The Gifted Child Development and Guidance Program of Virginia Beach City (Virginia) Public Schools was developed to interest gifted college-bound students in a vocational class in child development and guidance that might lead to further career interest in child-related professions. This report briefly describes program promotion; student selection; curriculum development; and program activities such as mentorships, field trips, and experience with preschool children. The program covered theories and philosophies of child development, careers relating to early childhood, genetic and environmental effects on the developing fetus, exceptional children, guidance techniques, and safety techniques. Results of a survey of students and parents indicated overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward the program. The bulk of the report is composed of program evaluation forms and tables of survey results. (JDD)

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VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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GIFTED CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND GUIDANCE STUDY

ED339179

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June 1990

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Introduction

In March 1990, an evaluation was requested by Mr. Fran Foster, Director of Vocational Education, for the Gifted Child Development and Guidance Program which is currently housed at Salem High School.

The Gifted Child Development and Guidance Program was originally conceived and planned by a child care occupations teacher at the Virginia Beach Vocational-Technical Center. The program was an attempt to interest gifted students in a vocational class in child development and guidance which might lead to further career interest in child-related professions. The program was funded through a grant from the Virginia State Department of Education. The following procedures were utilized in developing the first-year program which was implemented in the 1988-89 school year:

1. Goals and objectives were identified for writing a Gifted Child Development and Guidance curriculum guide for a one-year program. The first step in this development was to survey all states in the nation for curricula already developed in their areas. Texas had developed a guide called Advanced Child Development. After a request was made to review and use ideas from this guide, some of the classroom instructional activities were identified for implementation.

2. Textbooks, brochures, and other materials were studied to understand the unique needs of gifted students. Appropriate materials, media, and reference resources were identified.

   Activities were identified for stimulating critical thinking skills. Career skills and opportunities were explored. An apprenticeship/ mentorship experience was provided to allow students to gain knowledge of career options. Field trips to medical establishments and other child-related businesses enriched the learning experiences. Preschool children were invited to the classroom to provide hands-on experiences for the gifted students. Through a wide variety of practical, challenging, and real-life experiences, the students experienced a broader spectrum of child-related professions.

3. Promotional materials were developed to inform students, parents, school personnel, and community employers about the program. An interview with the child care occupations teacher on the school-sponsored television station also highlighted the program. Memos were sent to principals of secondary schools to keep them updated on the progress of this new gifted/vocational education venture. Articles describing the program were in the local media. Special programs were presented to the school system's guidance personnel.

4. Students eligible for the program were those who were college bound with a 3.0 grade point average and who were interested in entering an early childhood related occupation. Gifted program and guidance personnel assisted with the selection of students.

5. In order to develop a quality curriculum guide, professionals from the business community, the local community college, and the school system were identified as consultants. Planning sessions were held with the committee. With the help of the consultants, the competencies to be taught were identified. The Coordinator of the Gifted Program presented many ideas for stimulating critical thinking, problem solving, organization, coping, group processing, decision making, and encouraging creative expression. The assistant principal of the Vocational-Technical Center, who was a former child care occupations teacher, correlated all of the ideas into a final draft.

As described by Mrs. Elizabeth C. Thomas, a child care occupations teacher at the Vocational-Technical Center, and Mrs. Phyllis F. Cannon, Coordinator of Home Economics, in a paper written for publication in a national magazine:

> The competency-based education guide allows the student to study different theorists and their philosophies relating to child development and guidance. The students, explore careers relating to early childhood, such as education, art therapy, play therapy, child psychology, and pediatric nursing. Employability skills are emphasized. Some of the instructional activities include guest speakers from medical professions, media and instructional specialists, preschool directors, nutritionists, and health care specialists. Many opportunities are presented for research, hands-on experience, development of instructional materials, leadership training, cognitive development, and self-expression.
>
> The genetic and environmental effects on the developing fetus are also studied. Students will examine the patterns of

The genetic and environmental effects on the developing fetus are also studied. Students will examine the patterns of child development, including physical maturation, and emotional, social, and intellectual development. Carefully selected toys and educational manipulatives are a part of the study of stimulating and motivating child growth. Examples as suggested by Piaget, Montessori, and British Infant School theorists have been selected.

Other task areas studied will be exceptional children, guidance techniques, general behavior, and safety techniques. The production of a first aid handbook for children will be a classroom cooperative effort.

Preschool children will be invited to the classroom one day per week to allow the students to observe, study, and analyze behaviors, patterns, and problems. This enrichment experience will provide the high school student hands-on experiences for guiding, understanding, and learning about children. Learning centers teaching art, music, science, dramatic play, language arts, storytelling, and practical life applications will be created and used with the children.

An especially exciting feature of the class is the mentorship component. The students will explore areas of related interests through an internship/mentorship program. The one-semester course will permit the students to participate in this activity for approximately one week to ten days. Working with professionals in the community, students will have the opportunity to assess first hand child development service careers.

The Gifted Child Development and Guidance Program was taught as a one-year course in 1988-89 with gifted students receiving one practical arts credit. During the current year (1989-90), two classes were taught. One class was located at the Vocational-Technical Center while the second was established as a pilot program at Salem High School. This year (1989-90), a decision was made by the Office of Vocational Education to eliminate the program completely at the Vocational-Technical Center for the 1990-91 school year and to conduct the program at Salem High School as a one-

semester class which would give participating students only one-half a practical arts credit.

After a meeting conducted with Mr. Foster in April 1990, it was decided to evaluate the pilot program at Salem High School. A joint meeting was scheduled with Mrs. Phyllis Cannon, Mrs. Brenda Snead, class instructor of the course at Salem High School, and Mr. Raymond Alexander, Planning Specialist, Educational Planning Center. A plan was developed to evaluate three different class populations–gifted students in the program, parents of gifted students in the program, and parents of preschool children in the program. In addition, an interview would be conducted with the class teacher to solicit her views on how well the pilot program has progressed.

The results of the three survey groups were overwhelmingly positive in nature about the program concept. Survey results can be found in Tables I, II, and III. All respondents (both students and parents) were pleased with the type of training and opportunities which the course provided for participants. On the parent surveys, 80 percent of the parents of gifted students and 92.9 percent of the parents of preschool students felt that the Gifted Child Development and Guidance program should be expanded and offered in other high schools. Positive comments for improvement were noted in the surveys (Tables I, II, and III). One prevailing comment found on all three survey forms was that both students and parents would like to see the program kept at one-year in length. There was no sentiment in favor of the proposed reduction to a semester.

In addition to the surveys, several conferences were conducted with Mrs. Brenda Snead. During the course of these conferences, the following concerns were expressed by her as needing to be examined in the future:

1. The term "gifted" should be clearly defined. Specific standards for entrance into the program should be established based upon this definition. Because the course is fast paced and requires much independent study, Mrs. Snead believes that future standards should continue to include a high grade point average and enrollment in a certain number of advanced-level courses.

2. The course should only be offered to juniors and seniors. This is due to scheduling transportation for the mentorship program. In addition, many of the menters have indicated that no one under the age of 16 may enter their institutions.

3. In the future, program teachers should be given the opportunity to critique course content after its initial year in any Virginia Beach high school.

4. Teachers will need special assistance from central office administrators in scheduling guest speakers, field trips, and mentors. Perhaps a composite list can be developed and distributed.

5. The matter of insurance to cover students as they work with mentors needs to be investigated. According to Mrs. Snead, this was a problem during the current year.

6. Students and parents should be given a clear course description with standards for enrollment outlined in preregistration materials.

In conclusion, it appears that the Gifted Child Development and Guidance program has been extremely popular with both students and parents. All participants believe that the program is meeting a definite need and should be continued. All participants (including the current teacher) believe that this program can make a positive contribution to students who may be interested in a career in a child-related profession. Almost all parents believe that the course needs to be expanded into all senior high schools. The only consensus area of concern is that of the administration's proposed reduction of the length of the program from one-year to half-year. In view of this, it may be prudent to re-examine this proposal before implementation.

TABLE I

Gifted Child Development and Guidance
Student Survey Responses

	Number of Responses	%
Number of Students - 15	12	80.0
Were opportunities provided in activities related to child development?		
Excellent opportunities	12	100.0
Satisfactory opportunities	0	0
Adequate opportunities	0	0
Barely adequate opportunities	0	0
Were opportunities provided to explore career connections?		
All career connections explored	6	50.0
Most career connections explored	6	50.0
Very few career connections explored	0	0
No career connections explored	0	0
Were equipment and materials utilized appropriate for understanding child development concepts?		
Very effective	9	75.0
Satisfactory	3	25.0
Not effective	0	0
Were opportunities provided to meet and work with professionals in a mentorship capacity?		
Many opportunities provided	10	83.3
A few opportunities provided	2	16.7
No opportunities provided	0	0
Has working with young children been beneficial in your academic development?		
Very beneficial	10	83.3
Moderately beneficial	2	16.7
Not beneficial	0	0
Do you believe that this course should be expanded and made available to more students?		
Definitely yes	4	33.3
Course is fine in present format	7	58.3
Have no opinion	1	8.3

TABLE I

Gifted Child Development and Guidance
Student Survey Responses
(Continued)

	Number of Responses	%
Would you encourage others to enroll?		
Definitely would encourage	10	83.3
Unsure	2	16.7
Would not encourage	0	0

Additional Comments on Needed Improvements

- Maintain program as a one-year course; do not reduce to one semester.
- Make better utilization of books and play activities with preschoolers.
- Conduct even more research on different kinds of careers related to children.
- Do not offer class to ninth or tenth grade students (because of difficulty with transportation).

TABLE II

Gifted Child Development and Guidance
Parent Survey Responses (Gifted Students)

	Number of Responses	%
Number of Returned Surveys - 10	10	100.0
Were opportunities provided for your child in activities related to child development?		
Excellent opportunities	9	90.0
Satisfactory opportunities	1	10.0
Adequate opportunities	0	0
Barely adequate opportunities	0	0
Were opportunities provided for your child to explore career connections?		
All career connections explored	5	50.0
Most career connections explored	5	50.0
Very few career connections explored	0	0
No career connections explored	0	0
Were equipment and materials utilized with your child appropriate for understanding child development concepts?		
Very effective	8	80.0
Satisfactory	2	20.0
Not effective	0	0
Were opportunities provided for your child to meet and work with professionals in a mentorship capacity?		
Many opportunities provided	8	80.0
A few opportunities provided	2	20.0
No opportunities provided	0	0
Was working with young children beneficial to your child's academic development?		
Very beneficial	9	90.0
Moderately beneficial	1	10.0
Not beneficial	0	0

TABLE II

Gifted Child Development and Guidance
Parent Survey Responses (Gifted Students)
(Continued)

	Number of Responses	%
Do you believe that this course should be offered in all high schools?		
Strongly agree	8	80.0
Moderately agree	2	20.0
Disagree	0	0

Additional Comments on Needed Improvements

- Maintain program as a one-year course.
- Provide additional information on child abuse.
- Enlarge the mentorship portion of the program.

TABLE III

Gifted Child Development and Guidance
Parent Survey Responses (Preschool Students)

	Number of Responses	%
Number of Returned Surveys - 14	14	100.0
Has the current program provided for development of socialization skills of your child?		
Very effective	11	78.6
Satisfactory or adequate	3	21.4
Not very effective	0	0
Has the current program provided for development of your child's gross motor skills?		
Very effective	9	64.3
Satisfactory or adequate	5	35.7
Not very effective	0	0
Have gifted home economic students provided an emotional benefit for your child?		
Definite benefit	12	85.7
Moderate benefit	2	14.3
Not much benefit	0	0
Has this program helped prepare your child for preschool or kindergarten?		
Strongly agree	13	92.9
Moderately agree	1	7.1
Do not agree	0	0
Were activities provided appropriate to your child's age and level of understanding?		
Very appropriate	12	85.7
Moderately appropriate	2	14.3
Not appropriate	0	0
Did you feel comfortable with the level of care and attention provided for your child?		
Very comfortable	14	100.0
Moderately comfortable	0	0
Not very comfortable	0	0

TABLE III

Gifted Child Development and Guidance
Parent Survey Responses (Preschool Students)
(Continued)

	Number of Responses	%
Did your providing transportation for your preschooler prove to be a problem?		
Not a problem	8	57.1
A moderate problem	6	42.9
A severe problem	0	0
Do you believe that this program should be expanded and offered in all high schools?		
Strongly agree	13	92.9
Moderately agree	1	7.1
Disagree	0	0
Did learning centers prove to be effective with your child?		
Very effective	13	92.9
Moderately effective	1	7.1
Not very effective	0	0

Additional Comments on Needed Improvements

- Provide an earlier time frame for preschoolers (i.e., 9-11 a.m. or 10-12 noon).
- Provide "show and tell" activities.
- Have preschoolers ready to go at pickup time.
- Extend the total length of the program.
- Expand program to other high schools.

VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Gifted Child Development and Guidance
Student Evaluation

Please complete the following questionnaire concerning the effectiveness of the class entitled Gifted Child Development and Guidance. This information will be utilized in helping to decide whether the program will be continued and/or expanded. Please return the form to your teacher, Mrs. Brenda Snead, when completed. Thank you for your assistance.

1. Did the current program provide opportunities for you to gain experience in activities related to child development?

   _____Excellent opportunities
   _____Satisfactory opportunities
   _____Adequate opportunities
   _____Barely Adequate opportunities

2. Were opportunities provided for you to explore career connections in areas such as child psychology, teaching, family medicine, pediatrics, and guidance?

   _____All career connections were explored
   _____Most career connections were explored
   _____Very few career connections were explored
   _____No career connections were explored

3. Were equipment and materials utilized in the class appropriate for helping you understand child development concepts?

   _____Equipment/materials were very effective
   _____Equipment/materials were satisfactory
   _____Equipment/materials were not effective

4. Were opportunities provided for you to meet and work with professionals from various fields in a mentorship capacity?

   _____Many opportunities were provided
   _____Just a few opportunities were provided
   _____No opportunities were provided

5. Do you believe that working with young children has been beneficial to you in your academic development?

_____It has proven to be very beneficial
_____It has proven to be moderately beneficial
_____It has not proven to be beneficial

6. Do you believe that this course should be expanded and made available to more students?

_____Definitely yes
_____Course is fine in its present format
_____Have no opinion on this question

7. Would you encourage others to enroll in this program?

_____Definitely would encourage
_____Unsure whether I would encourage
_____Would not encourage

8. Please list any suggestions you may have for improving the Gifted Child Development and Guidance program.

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VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Gifted Child Development and Guidance
Parent Evaluation - Gifted Students

Please complete the following questionnaire concerning the effectiveness of the class entitled Gifted Child Development and Guidance. This information will be utilized in helping to decide whether the program will be continued and/or expanded. Please return the form to Mrs. Brenda Snead at Salem High School, 2300 Lynnhaven Parkway, Virginia Beach, Virginia 23456, by Friday, May 11, 1990. Thank you for your assistance.

1. Did the current program provide opportunities for your child to gain experience in activities related to child development?

   _____Excellent opportunities
   _____Satisfactory opportunities
   _____Adequate opportunities
   _____Barely adequate opportunities

2. Were opportunities provided for your child to explore career connections in areas such as child psychology, teaching, family medicine, pediatrics, and guidance?

   _____All career connections were explored
   _____Most career connections were explored
   _____Very few career connections were explored
   _____No career connections were explored

3. Were equipment and materials utilized in the class appropriate for helping your child understand child development concepts?

   _____Equipment/materials were very effective
   _____Equipment/materials were satisfactory
   _____Equipment/materials were not effective

4. Were opportunities provided for your child to meet and work with professionals from various fields in a mentorship capacity?

   _____Many opportunities were provided
   _____Just a few opportunities were provided
   _____No opportunities were provided

5. Do you believe that your child's working with young children from various ethnic and social backgrounds has proven to be beneficial in his/her educational preparation?

_____It has proven to be very beneficial
_____It has proven to be moderately beneficial
_____It has not proven to be beneficial

6. Do you believe that this course should be offered in all high schools in Virginia Beach?

_____Strongly agree
_____Moderately agree
_____Disagree

7. Please list any suggestions you may have for improving the Gifted Child Development and Guidance program.

_____

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VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Gifted Child Development and Guidance
Parent Evaluation - Preschool Students

Please complete the following questionnaire concerning the effectiveness of the class entitled Gifted Child Development and Guidance. This information will be utilized in helping to decide whether the program will be continued and/or expanded. Please return the form to Mrs. Brenda Snead at Salem High School, 2300 Lynnhaven Parkway, Virginia Beach, Virginia 23456, by Friday, May 11, 1990. Thank you for your assistance.

1. Has the current preschool program been effective in providing for the development of socialization skills of your child?

   _____Very effective
   _____Satisfactory or Adequate
   _____Not very effective

2. Has the current preschool program provided for effective development of your child's gross motor skills?

   _____Very effective
   _____Satisfactory or Adequate
   _____Not very effective

3. Have gifted home economics students provided an emotional benefit for your child?

   _____Have provided a definite benefit
   _____Have provided a moderate benefit
   _____Have not provided much benefit

4. Do you agree that this program helped prepare your child for preschool or kindergarten?

   _____Strongly agree
   _____Moderately agree
   _____Do not agree

5. Do you feel that the activities provided were appropriate to your child's age and level of understanding?

   _____Activities were very appropriate
   _____Activities were only moderately appropriate
   _____Activities were not appropriate

6. Did you feel comfortable with the level of care and attention provided for your child?

_____Very comfortable
_____Only moderately comfortable
_____Not very comfortable

7. Did your providing transportation for your preschooler prove to be a problem?

_____Transportation was not a problem
_____Transportation was a moderate problem
_____Transportation was a severe problem

8. Do you believe that this program should be expanded and offered in all high schools in Virginia Beach?

_____Strongly agree
_____Moderately agree
_____Disagree

9. Did learning centers teaching art, music, science, dramatic play, language arts, and storytelling prove to be effective with your child?

_____Very effective
_____Moderately effective
_____Not very effective

10. Please list any suggestions you may have for improving the Gifted Child Development and Guidance program.

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